



HiddenChina.net

Ethnic Minorities in Southwest China

- Visit the unique karst scenery of Guangxi and Guizhou
- Travel from Guangxi through Guizhou to Guiyang
- Visit the local Zhuang, Dong and Miao minorities
- Enjoy a special tour off the beaten tracks
- Stay overnight at local people's places
- Get fantastic picture opportunities



SOUTHWESTERN MINORITIES DISCOVERY TOUR

This trip is specially designed for travelers who want to see the real China and travel off the beaten tracks. Starting from world-famous Guilin you will enter Guizhou, one of China's poorest provinces. Heading through beautiful valleys you will visit the Zhuang, Dong and Miao minorities, get a fantastic experience in rural China and get to know its vast cultural diversity. This trip requires certain adaptation as you will stay at local people's homes in some places. So if you expect 5* comfort and luxurious hotels, this is not the right itinerary for you.

- Best Travel Date: April, May and September, October
- Destinations: Shanghai, Guilin, Sanjiang, Rongjiang, Congjiang, Xijiang, Kaili, Guiyang
- Duration: 13 days
- Starting in: Shanghai
- Ending in: Shanghai
- Group size: min. 6 pax, max. 10 pax

QUICK INTRODUCTION

The Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau is located in the hinterland of China with high and precipitous mountains. The Yunnan Plateau is 1800-1900 meters and the Guizhou Plateau is on average 1000 meters above sea level. They are cut by many rivers and separated into hilly areas, river valleys, basins and small plains. Its complex topography forms the unique natural landscapes here. The Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau is also home to different ethnic groups, such as the Miao, Dong, Zhuang, Yi, Zhao, etc. They live here and form the cultural customs of ethnic minorities in Southwest China. Going deep into the southwestern hinterland, exploring the natural landscapes and living conditions of the ethnic groups here, will give you further understanding of China.



DAY 1 SHANGHAI - GUILIN (D)

After arrival in Guilin, you will meet our guide and be transferred to your hotel. In the afternoon you can relax from the flight and in the evening we will take you to a welcome dinner. You will stay overnight in a 4* Courtyard Hotel.

DAY 2 GUILIN (B/L/D)

Sightseeing in downtown Guilin

Scenic spots: Reed flute Cave (Ludi), Ripple Riding Hill (Fuboshan), Yao Mountain, Seven-Star Cave

In the morning, we will go for sightseeing in the downtown area of Guilin. The Reed Flute Cave is known as a "palace of natural art." Along its zigzag path are unusual stalactites and stalagmites. They have artificial lighting and remind you of coral, agate, amber, or jade -- a wonderland of formations



resembling orchards, gardens, or whatever else you care to imagine. The Ripple Riding Hill is located on the west bank of the Li River. From the top you get a great view of the whole city (climbing needs 20 minutes). Afterwards we will walk to the Elephant Trunk Hill, the symbol of Guilin. In the afternoon, visit the Yao Mountain and the nearby 500 years old mausoleums of the Ming Dynasty. Later we will go to the Seven-Star Cave in the downtown area which is the largest comprehensive park in Guilin. It was an underground river channel, which, with the movement of the earth's crust, rose above the surface to become a cavern.

In-cave temperature is about 20 °C. The cave has been a sightseeing spot since the Sui and Tang dynasties more than 1,300 years ago. Over the centuries, visitors have left behind many poems and other inscriptions on its walls. The whole journey is 800 meters.

DAY 3 GUILIN - LONGJI TITIAN (B/L/D)

The next day we drive by coach to one of the most famous sightseeing places in China. The journey will take about 4 hours and lead us to the "Dragon's Backbone Rice Terraces". Although you will encounter quite many tourists, the place is not as flooded as Yangshuo or Lijiang. Nevertheless, the place has fantastic views and offers you sensational picture opportunities to photograph these world famous rice terraces, which are 700 years old. We will stay at the Zhuang minority village "Ping'An", which offers a range of hostels and restaurants. We will stay overnight in one of the simple family guesthouses.



DAY 4 LONGJI TITIAN (B/L/D)

Today we spend the entire day in Ping'An where you can either go for some lovely hikes on your own or together with the group. If you like you can also find a nice spot somewhere, relax for the day and enjoy the great view.

DAY 5 LONGSHENG - SANJIANG (B/L/D)

From the rice terraces we head early in the morning to Sanjiang by coach. Sanjiang is actually not really worth a visit, but after a 20 km drive, we will visit the Wind & Rain Bridge at Chengyang. The local Dong minority is famous for building these wooden bridges and with 78 meters length, the Wind & Rain Bridge is the largest and most famous of the 108 bridges built in the area. In the afternoon you will also enjoy an open-air performance of the customs of the local minority.

**DAY 6 SANJIANG - CONGJIANG (B/L/D)**

From Sanjiang we leave the province of Guangxi and enter Guizhou. From now on we will leave the beaten tracks for a few days and head into an area which just started to realize that tourism can be a source of income. The journey will take us along a beautiful river valley to Congjiang. If we have time, we will visit another Dong minority village nearby. In the evening we have dinner in one of the local street restaurants.

DAY 7 CONGJIANG - RONGJIANG (B/L/D)

Leaving Congjiang behind us, we drive to Rongjiang and then on to a small Dong village. After a short walk, we will stay overnight again in a local community. This is particularly interesting as you will see one area which is still quite untouched by tourism, although it is slowly starting. Stay in the village and observe the way of living of the locals. In the evening the girls of the village will jump in their Sunday dresses and perform local dances and sing their songs. Overnight at local family, basic living conditions.

**DAY 8 RONGJIANG - XIJIANG (B/L/D)**

Today it's probably the longest journey of the trip. As we have to travel from Rongjiang to Xijiang, we will spend most of the day in the coach. But don't worry; the trip is worth it as we will arrive today in one of the loveliest minority towns of China, in Xijiang.



Also here, the local Miao minority just started to realize that tourism can be a major source of income. Even during the May holidays (also called the Golden Holiday Week); only 50 tourists were in town, although this time is probably the busiest traveling period in China. The locals will dress up and perform their local dances in the late afternoon.

The Miao minority is famous for their huge silver hats, which are actually rather helmets and also for their heavy silver jewelry. In China known as rebellious and independent people, the Miao have an interesting migration story to tell and were also secretly occupied by the CIA during the Vietnam War.

DAY 9 XIJIANG - GUIYANG (B/L/D)

From Xijiang we leave the rather undiscovered paths and enter a more touristy area again. After lunch in Kaili we will head on to Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou.

DAY 10 GUIYANG - ANSHUN (HUANGGUO SHU) (B/L/D)

Early in the morning we take the highway which leads us in 2.5 hours to the largest waterfalls of China, the Huangguoshu. With a height of 78 meters, the waterfalls are spectacular, especially during the rainy season. In the dry season, the amount of water will be very small; on the other side the colors of the environment are much more spectacular. However, we won't spend too much time at the waterfalls. In the afternoon we will go to the nearby Tianxing Qiao, a wonderful nature park. There we will stay for the rest of the day and you will enjoy a wonderful hike of about 2 hours through fantastic scenery.



In the early evening we transfer to Anshun, where we stay 3 nights in a simple hotel.

DAY 11 ANSHUN (ZHIJIN DONG) (B/L/D)

Today we make an excursion to China's largest caves, the Zhijin Dong. We have quite a long trip again, as it takes us about 3 hours to get there. However, the journey is worthwhile as the caves are extremely impressive. With heights up to 180 meters, huge caverns and impressive stalactites and stalagmites, you have an exceptional opportunity to make impressive pictures. Please take a tripod with you, it's definitely worth it. Tripods can be bought more or less all over China at a very low price, so you don't necessarily need to carry one along from your home country.

DAY 12 ANSHUN (LONGGONG DONG) (B/L/D)

On our last day we will visit the Longgong Caves. As this area is just outside of Anshun, it is more a day of relaxing and strolling around the lovely paths. You will have a last opportunity to take pictures from the locals during their everyday life. In addition we will enter a water cave by boat, so again you will have a different experience.

**DAY 13 ANSHUN - GUIYANG - HONG KONG (B/L/D)**

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

[Contact us](#) per mail for a tailor-made itinerary.

Our other ethnic minorities' discovery tours in China:

[9 days Lhasa - Kathmandu](#)

RATES

RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN: **ON REQUEST**

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: **ON REQUEST**

INCLUDED SERVICES:

- experienced tour leader and local tour guides for all days, English/Chinese-speaking
- all air and train tickets within China
- airport taxes in China
- accommodation in selected hotels in double rooms as mentioned in the itinerary
- outside the cities accommodation in basic, but clean guest houses in double rooms
- full board except on free afternoons/evenings (described as B,L,D: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)
- all highway fees as mentioned in the itinerary
- entrance fees to sightseeing spots mentioned in the itinerary
- all transfers mentioned in the itinerary
- meals as mentioned in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED:

- personal expenses such as laundry, tips etc.
- transports not mentioned in the itinerary (such as taxis in the evening, etc.)
- drinks and all meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- expenses for medical care
- insurances (travel insurance, travel cancellation insurance)
- repatriation flights in case of emergencies (REGA membership is recommended)

INSURANCE IS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARTICIPANT!

IMPORTANT NOTE

Traveling in China, especially off the beaten tracks and in rural areas, can be adventurous and carries also a certain amount of surprises and risks. HiddenChina.net ensures that in every situation we and our guides are trying to get out a maximum of comfort for our clients. All our guides are carefully chosen and selected by their abilities and experience. Nevertheless, there might be surprises. We hereby express that a voyage in China needs patience, adaptation and tolerance. In addition due to lack of infrastructure, in rural areas in China there is often a lack of western sanitary standards. Clients of hiddenChina.net accept - upon signing a contract - to be aware of these circumstances, and accept changes which may occur in order to keep security and comfort of the clients according to the circumstances to a maximum during the trip.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR CHINA TRAVELERS

Traveling in China is always an adventure. Quality of service can range from “top” in selected 5* Hotels in the big cities to “very poor”. While traveling in China, even with an organized tour, the clients have to be ready for unexpected changes (e.g. due to natural disasters such as landslides or flooding) or other surprises. In hotels by example, it can happen that you will get phone calls in the middle of the night, offering you a special massage service. The following chapters will tell you more about what you should consider when traveling in China.

FACE

You may have heard it before and for the experienced China traveler it's a “must know”: In China, everything is about “giving and losing face”. Chinese people are very proud of their culture, food and traditions. Respect this fact and try not to bring a Chinese into an embarrassing situation, as he or she might lose his face in front of coworkers, friends, family members or even the authorities. Try to be polite, smile and - especially to English speaking Chinese - always praise their language skills. Chinese can be considered as reactive people. If you treat Chinese people in an arrogant and harsh way, you will be treated the same way. When you feel cheated, try to solve the situation in a gentle and charming way. You will achieve your goal much faster. Also try to react calmly in stress situations and stay friendly. For every problem in China there is a solution. It's up to you how effective you will get to this solution. Being angry and aggressive is contra productive in the most cases.

SECURITY

Especially large cities in China are extremely safe. Chinese people have to fear severe punishment when being caught by the authorities in illegal matters when foreigners are involved. However, be aware that pick pocketing happens everywhere, so keep an eye on your belongings and never leave your luggage unattended. When going out at night, China's large cities are much safer than practically all European cities. A single woman has nothing to fear when walking in a dark alley even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

HEALTH

It is also recommended to visit your house doctor before you go on a China trip and make all the necessary vaccinations. Your doctor will inform you what you will need. For travelers going to south China, it is also recommended to carry a supply of Malaria remedies. As the avian influenza is getting more and more a serious issue in Asia and a pandemic outbreak will happen sooner or later, the traveler should also consider buying a box of “Tamiflu” before the trip begins.

When traveling in China and especially when eating a lot of local food, a supply of remedies for stomach problems is highly recommended. We will always take care of taking you to clean restaurants with high quality standards. However, your body will have to deal with a wide range of unknown food, spices and other ingredients in China and also with different bacteria and viruses than in Europe’s clean environment. When being on a 3 week China trip, you have to reckon with stomach problems at least once. To cure them it is recommended to take pharmaceuticals, which are rich in salt and minerals and give you back the elements you will lose during a diarrhea. From our longtime China experience, one of the best remedies is to eat well-boiled Chinese mushrooms and bananas as well as to drink tomato juice. On many of our private trips, this helped much better than the Western medication like e.g. Imodium. Always take toilet paper with you, as you won’t find any in public toilets! Travelers going to high altitude areas such as Tibet are also recommended to take a supply of Diamox in case of altitude sickness. Please get advice from your doctor.

CLIMATE

China has several different climatic zones. From high-altitude to sub-tropic and desert climate, there is everything. Depending on your date of arrival in China, you might be traveling in the rainy season. E.g. in southern China, this time mostly starts late May / early June and lasts until August. This year, in the provinces of Guangxi and Guizhou heavy flooding took the life of several hundred local people. However, we will adapt the trip according to your travel time and avoid the areas with heavy rain.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines allow you to check-in 20 kg of luggage (economy class). It is not allowed to take nutrition products (cheese, meat) as well as pornographic material. Please ensure that your “Swiss army knife” and other “dangerous products” are checked in with your luggage and not in the hand luggage.

China offers you a wide range of shopping possibilities. So if you plan to go for extensive shopping, take a minimum of luggage to China. However, whenever you forgot something, don’t worry, more or less everything you need in daily life, can be bought much cheaper in China (see chapter below). Be aware that many customs authorities like the ones in Paris and Milan can fine you heavily when finding out that you try to import faked products from China such as Yves St Laurent bags, Gucci items or Prada clothes.

SHOPPING

Except for imported luxury goods and high-end electrical equipment such as beamers or imported laptops, more or less everything is cheaper in China than in Western Europe. Especially clothes can be bought at a very low price. Many shopping areas offer faked products (sometimes in extremely good quality). However, in many places where no prices are indicated you have to bargain about the price (see chapter below). Please note that when buying a faked product, especially at the airport in Paris, you can get into trouble. The fight against faked products is now at a point, that authorities can or will take away your purchase and will heavily fine you. For the golf lovers, there is a wide range of possibilities to buy whole golf sets at a ridiculously low price. Have your suits tailor-made, buy ties, silk products, pearls etc. at a very low price. For most Europeans, DVD's are of special interest. For a DVD you pay between 8 and 10 RMB (about 1 EURO) and most of the movies are available even before they are shown in European cinemas. The advantage is that DVD's take away only little space and weight. But be aware that in many cases you are buying illegally copied and distributed products.

Credit cards are only accepted in major stores, 3* hotels and upwards and western restaurants. Money can be withdrawn at ATM's at the Bank of China. Please note that these are hard to find in remote areas. Money can be changed at major branches of the Bank of China or in western hotels. Please note that you need to show your passport for changing money.

BARGAINING

As mentioned in the "shopping" chapter, in many places you have to bargain for your price. Western tourists are mostly looked at as "big dollar signs" and accordingly the price will be set 400 – 500% above the price the vendor is ready to sell his or her merchandise. The first rule is to go below the first offered price. So when the vendor asks for 100 RMB, you can set your offer to 20-25 RMB. Then it depends on your bargaining skills at what price you will get it. A simple trick is, when it seems too expensive for you, to walk away from the vendor. If he or she doesn't follow you, you know that your bid was too low. Please also note, always stay friendly and smile when bargaining. Once you agreed for a price, you have to buy the product. Otherwise you and the vendor will lose face.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

Even in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, it is most unlikely that you find English speaking taxi drivers or personnel in the shops. Therefore it is recommended to take a phrase book with you, where you can show what you need.

Chinese people are mostly friendly and curious towards foreigners. However, Chinese are also very proud of their country and culture and some behavior will be strange for travelers who come to China for the first time. In many places (even sometimes in public buses) people smoke a lot and for the non-smoker, China can be a terrible place. You also often see Chinese people spitting accompanied by strange noises. The best way to get around it is to ignore it and live with it. For the smoker on the other hand China is a paradise, as it is more or less everywhere allowed to smoke and cigarettes are extremely cheap, although some foreign brands might be faked. Please also note that you might be invited to test your drinking skills. The easiest way to avoid it without losing face is to tell your hosts that due to liver problems you're not allowed to drink.

TIPPING

Although China is - especially away from the big cities - a very poor country, tipping only exists in the 5* surroundings of the big cities. In restaurants or taxis and hotels (except 5* hotels) tipping is a no-no. However, tour guides and drivers of organized tours should be tipped. Most guides and drivers are roughly paid with 10 Euro per day and rely on additional income. With Chinese tour groups (which often go shopping) the guides always get a commission in the shops, where they make most of their salary. As European groups usually do not visit as many shops as Chinese tourists, guides and drivers have to rely on tips.

Generally a tip of RMB 30 per person and day is reasonable. When you are in a tour group it is recommended that the group collects the tips and hands it to the guides and drivers in an envelope. It is also very helpful to take some souvenirs with you, like for example watches or picture postcards from your home country.

SMALL TALK AND CONVERSATION

Small talk in China is a bit different than in Europe, but there are also topics which should be avoided and topics which are perfect for small talk.

One of the most common greetings in China is “Ni chi fan le ma?” which literally means “Have you eaten yet?” This emphasizes the importance of eating in China, and it is much more a social event than in the West, therefore food is always a welcomed topic.

In some cases you also might be confronted with rather private questions such as about your marital status and about family. The Chinese are very family oriented, so don't feel embarrassed when people ask you rather private questions, it's just small talk. Sometimes, especially in business surroundings, people also might ask you about your salary, which is quite normal in China. Here you can escape (if you don't want to tell the truth) by telling some fictional figure, or when telling the truth and your counterpart's eyebrows rise, you explain how expensive the life in Europe is.

Topics which should be avoided at all costs are all political related such as the Cultural Revolution, critics against the system or chairman Mao, the Tibet and Taiwan question, human rights or how to treat animals. If you want to have answers to these questions you might do it through your guide. Do not overload your guide with too many hard questions in the beginning though. Tactically it is wise to hide these questions in some compliments and be as subtle as possible (see also the chapter about “face”). Please note that young Chinese (below 30) are more open to discuss critical topics than people above 30.

Please also note that Chinese people tend to touch you, which is not a sign of homosexuality but just a sign of sympathy. In such a situation, when you feel uncomfortable, don't react in a rude or harsh way; just try to escape the contact by elegant means. Mostly a hearty fit of coughing does the trick (SARS is still in Chinese people's mind).

TRAFFIC AND TAXI

The public transport system in China is basically quite convenient. Every major city has an airport; there are many train routes (even though there is mostly only one train per day between two destinations) and public buses. Public buses are very cheap although the comfort is sometimes a bit poor.

In the cities, the most convenient public transport is the taxi. You can, compared to Europe, basically take a taxi anytime and everywhere at a very low price. Be careful that on major tourist sites there are also drivers trying to make extra money. When a taxi has no taximeter (make sure that the driver in taxis with a taximeter always puts it on), negotiate the rate before you get into the vehicle. However, some drivers will still try to make you pay an extra fee at the end. Just tell him that you pay the negotiated price, nothing more, and nothing less. Please also note that most drivers don't speak English. So take a bilingual map, a taxi card or a guidebook with you. Tell the reception in the hotel to write down the addresses for you so you can show it to the driver. Please note that highway fares have to be paid by the customer and not the driver (for example, in Beijing the fee for the airport expressway is 10 Yuan for passenger cars). This fee will be added to the amount shown on the taximeter.

USEFUL THINGS TO TAKE ON A CHINA TRIP

Several Swiss army knives, a compass, pharmaceuticals (see health chapter), a first-aid kit, tape, watches (not too expensive), money clip, camera (films can be bought and developed on spot for a very reasonable price), deodorant (rarely available in China), sunglasses, altimeter (for Tibet and Himalaya tours), GPS, safety belt for money, literature, guidebooks, credit-/bank card and a lot of patience.

For ladies: tampons are rarely available in China.